

is the child of those who saved you from hunger and death, and as you deal with that girl may you meet with a blessing or a curse !”

She sank back in her seat and leant her head on the table, but the young man answered only by a mocking laugh as he closed the door behind him. Long she remained immovable in the attitude in which he had left her, till at last, murmuring in a voice of agony ; “ And yet he is my own son !” She rose, and taking a crucifix from the mantel-piece she knelt before it in prayer till the dawn of day.

CHAPTER II.

Your brother—no, no brother ; yet the son—
Yet not the son ; I will not call him son
Of him I was about to call his father.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

In one of the finest houses in London was a large and lofty room furnished in a style of the most luxurious and tasteful elegance. Exquisite paintings adorned the walls ; in graceful niches stood statues of ideal beauty ; on tables of choice mosaic-work, marble, and marquetry, lay rare and costly gems, magnificently bound books, and precious rarities of every description ; urns, vases and candelabra of inestimable price were scattered around, and all that could excite admiration or envy seemed collected there. The light which illumined this chamber of splendor was thrown from above, and golden with the summer sun spread around a radiant and softened glow which transported the imagination to some gorgeous Eastern clime ; and the perfume with which alabaster and porphyry vases containing rare exotics filled the room, rendered the illusion complete. Reclining on a couch amidst all these objects of beauty, was a young man whose noble and classic style of form and feature would have been faultless but for a certain air of voluptuous languor which seemed to indicate that refined selfishness was the chief characteristic of his nature. He was carelessly tossing over various notes and cards of invitation, and seemed about to cast them all contemptuously from him, when a servant entered and informed his master that a person was very anxious to see him.

“ What description of person is he ?” asked Lord Embsdenburg, “ did he give no card or name ?”

“ None, my Lord, but he is not unlike some of those artists who used to plague your lordship in Italy. So as your lordship never refuses to see any of them”—

“ Certainly not—let him come here ;” and the man disappeared.

The next moment he ushered into the room the stranger, who followed him through the long apartment with the utmost self-possession, casting not one glance to the right hand or to the left, and bowing to Lord Embsdenburg, took his seat with the air of one who felt himself not in the least honored by being admitted into the presence of the young patrician. Yet there was nothing of fashion or polish in his dress or demeanor, and his movements were ungraceful though totally unconstrained. Still his massive brow, his keen, piercing dark eyes, from whose deep and mysterious brightness the gazer shrank with a feeling very nearly akin to dread and dislike, and his sarcastic curling mouth bore the indescribable stamp of mind plainly impressed upon them, and Embsdenburg doubted not that he was a laborer in some branch of science or philosophy seeking aid and encouragement from one who was well known as a liberal patron of every branch of art and literature. He had not failed to remark that his visitor had not vouchsafed the slightest attention to any of the rare and beautiful creations of genius which filled the room, which would have excited rapture in the humblest worshipper of the spirit of Beauty ; he therefore concluded that he was devoted to some of the sterner sciences, and thus thinking, glanced curiously at the thoughtful and gloomy expression of the stranger's countenance. At the same time the stranger was scrutinizing the young nobleman's face with the most penetrating accuracy, and at that moment had a third person entered he might have been struck by a certain likeness which was discernible between the two young men, notwithstanding the great beauty of one, and the marked plainness of the other ; a resemblance which occasionally appeared and vanished, during the whole of their interview. Lord Embsdenburg was the first to speak.

“ Can I be of any service to you, Sir !” he asked.

The stranger did not remove his eyes from the face of the young noble as he answered his question by another, “ I presume your lordship does not know who I am.”

“ I certainly have not that honor,” answered Embsdenburg, slightly smiling, “ but when you tell me your name,”—

“ My lord, I am your brother.”

“ My brother, fellow !” exclaimed Embsdenburg, half starting from his seat, at this plain and unpre-faced declaration, but the steady eye of him who had made it, shrank not from the haughty light which flashed from those of the young noble. “ My brother ! you jest.”

“ I never jest on important subjects,” answered the stranger composedly.